

Governors' Newsletter for Parents and Staff Autumn Term 2024

At the end of November, we met with the school leadership team to review our achievements towards our 5- year Strategy which we set in July 2022, and to look at areas to develop for both the short term and the remaining 3 years of the strategy. Changes in external factors such as government policies on curriculum, recruitment and pay, together with the falling birthrate nationally and locally and the rise in children with complex needs accessing mainstream education were considered together with our priority statements in each of the six areas.

Teaching and Learning: The positive impact on outcomes for pupils is evidenced not only in academic results but across the spectrum of participation in music, sport and the arts. The school provides a breadth of opportunities to develop the whole child and their readiness for the next stage of their education and life in the everchanging world. We will continue to develop their oracy skills across the curriculum as part two of the Voice 21 project. Our subject teams are looking at the intention, implementation and impact to ensure that we have consistency of teaching and sequential learning across all subjects. We will continue our work looking at inclusivity and diversity across the curriculum and the needs of the children with SEND and opportunities for pupils to achieve learning at Greater Depth.

Safeguarding: We recognised and had external validation that our safeguarding is effective and that we had made significant progress in raising awareness of on -line safety with all our stakeholders. The safeguarding and wellbeing strategies are well established, but we felt that we could improve further the communication of the link between our school values and British Values and the importance of inclusivity for those children with protected characteristics feeling safe and valued.

Staffing: We have established a distributed leadership model, and we continue to develop our year group leaders' and subject teams' leadership skills through internal and external development programmes. We have developed a supportive appraisal system for teaching staff and seek to emulate this for all staff, together with coaching opportunities. Our pupils' access to specialist teaching is highly valued and a key element of our staffing structure. We are proud of our staff retention but also aware of the need to review our successional planning across the school.

Digital and Technology: There are two aspects to this area, the curriculum and the operational technology. It is essential that we develop our pupils into critical thinkers so that they can utilise the everchanging digital tools safely. We need to ensure that the curriculum, which is based on a scheme called "Purple Mash" keeps evolving in line with the digital world for example teaching coding, and the use of AI. Our pupils' need to know how to keep themselves safe not only on school systems, where we ensure effective filtering and monitoring of on-line content, but also when they are using technology outside of the school system. We also need to develop a plan for providing the appropriate digital tools, and the expertise to service them, so that every area of the curriculum can be enhanced by their use. This is a priority area of focus for next 3 years.

Communication: We recognised that there has been significant improvement in the opportunities for parents to be informed of and get involved in their child's learning and other aspects of the school. We will continue to develop this area with a review of the website and parental engagement. We have had positive feedback from parents on the introduction of Class Dojo and we will remove our X presence. We will look at ways to market the school to the wider community and prospective parents and increase our partnership working opportunities with local organisations and secondary schools in the medium term.

Finance and Premises: We have been proactive in managing the finances of the school such that we have been able to sustain our strategy of setting a balanced budget and not incurring in an in- year deficit. We now need to move to the second stage of our strategy and to reduce our surplus through

a planned programme of expenditure over the next three years. We will work together with the PTFA and the LA to identify improvements to our learning environment, premises maintenance and technology with a programme of works which are fully costed. We will also review the benchmarks provided through the DFE to look at the balance of expenditure within our annual budget and seek to support the priorities outlined in all aspects of our strategic plan.

We will update our strategy plan document, which can be found in the Governors Section of Our School on the school website. Thank you to everyone for their contributions and feedback.

Shirley Kenworthy-Wright, Chair of Governors

Teaching and Learning Update

The partnership between LEPS' leadership and the T&L committee is really important - we need to be able to support and challenge the school's leaders effectively, and it's been good to welcome Emily to the T&L committee, hear her observations of LEPS' teaching, agree priorities and start building a strong partnership.

Those priorities include the ongoing work on oracy (which Shirley witnessed firsthand in a recent visit and found very encouraging), SEN provision, EYFS, and continuing to review and develop the role of the subject and year group leads; both of which will be a focus for school visits by governors in the coming two terms. Additionally, we are supporting the schools' initiatives to develop the art, writing, and maths curriculum provision.

One additional focus area this year is on playground and lunchtime behaviour - governors approved a new policy designed to create more clarity around behavioural expectations and ensure a safe, inclusive environment during breaktimes.

Andrew Wood, Chair of Teaching and Learning Committee

Resources Update

The Resources Committee may have a new chair and will be welcoming a new School Business Manager (SBM) Kim Browne in January - and a huge thank you to both their predecessors, Alex Vines and Varinder Rekhi for their fantastic work - but our work remains focused on the core objectives of delivering against our balanced budget while ensuring we continue to invest in the right areas for our children and school, in line with our 5-year Strategy.

We have met twice this term, firstly to agree the advert, job description and person specification for the SBM. Both Shirley and I were on the interview panel for this post, and we were delighted to meet two very strong experienced candidates as a result of the advert. Secondly, for our termly meeting to cover all aspects of staffing, finances and premises.

It has been both reassuring and satisfying to see on one hand, our budget continuing to track close to forecast - with mitigation strategies that were put in place to address things like rising utilities and staffing costs proving to work as intended; and on the other hand, important investments starting to bear fruit, such as the Olive Class provision, literacy programmes and facility upgrades. We'll continue to track the impacts these and other initiatives are having and how they can be enhanced going forward.

Of course, we are ever thankful for the funds raised by the PTFA that have most recently facilitated, among other things, new ICT equipment and improvements to the playground. These are hugely valuable investments which, without the funds raised by our school community, we would struggle to otherwise make.

Following the Governing Board's review of our 5-year Strategy this term we will have an opportunity to reassess how we are allocating costs and planning investments when we next come together as a Board and Resources Committee - by that time, with an eye firmly on our budget for the next financial year. We know that headwinds will continue to apply pressure to our forecasts but I'm confident we approach it in a strong position with eyes wide open, backed by an ambition to achieve our goals.

Ben Lever, Chair of Resources

Pay Committee Update

The committee met to review the Whole School Pay Policy and the Staff Appraisal Policy. We have retained the same policies for this academic year whilst we await new guidance from the Local Authority based on the changes announced by the Government. We have invested in a new digital system, Bluesky, to support the appraisal system and in time further enhance our staff continuous professional development (CPD).

Resham Baruah, Chair of Pay Committee

Safeguarding Update

Autumn term always brings with it updated guidance from the government in the form of Keeping Children Safe in Education; all staff and governors review this comprehensive document and complete a series of training sessions to ensure they understand their obligations to safeguarding and what's changed.

As we do every term, we recently reviewed the school's Single Central Record which ensures that anyone working around or with pupils has an up-to-date DBS check; as usual, records are complete and up to date, and Varinder leaves the SCR in a good place.

We welcomed Tanya Gallagher as Deputy Safeguarding lead; she has already made an impact and her experience as an education leader is really valuable as part of LEPS' safeguarding governance team.

Digital safeguarding and education continue to be important parts of this group's agenda; there is a lot of good, smart activity in this area, and we are continuing to work with the school to develop this within the curriculum as part of our five-year strategy.

Andrew Wood, Safeguarding Lead Governor

Thank You

The Governing Board are so proud of all our staff and want to thank you for the support you give one another and our pupils and parents. The opportunities that you provide for our pupils to develop the lifelong skills and the knowledge they need to develop to their individual potential are fantastic.

Thank you also goes to all our parents and carers for everything you do to support your children and our school.

Wishing you all a very happy, healthy and enjoyable festive break.